

Message Text

SECRET

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12

ACTION EA-14

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SUBJECT: VANG PAO IN THAILAND

REF: STATE 195092

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. CHIANG MAI DAILY THIN THAI AUGUST 31 CARRIED PAGE ONE STORY ABOUT VANG PAO'S VISIT HERE PREVIOUS DAY. STORY CLAIMED GENERAL VANG PAO ARRIVED VIA SPECIAL USAF PLANE WITH PARTY OF TEN FROM BANGKOK TO WHICH PARTY HAD FLOWN FROM LONG CHENG. IN CHIANG MAI PARTY STAYED AT RINCOME HOTEL, ALLEGEDLY AS GUEST OF A DR. SUCHIT. HOWEVER, GENERAL WAS ALSO SPECIAL GUEST OF BPP 5 COMMANDER, AND WAS ACCOMPANIED THROUGHOUT VISIT BY ITS DEPUTY COMMANDER POL. MAJ. PATANADEJ BOONMARK. NEVERTHELESS, VANG PAO'S VISIT WAS PRIVATE ONE "TO OBSERVE VARIOUS PROJECTS OF AGRICULTURE IN CHIANG MAI." PARTY RETURNED TO LONG CHENG AUGUST 31. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. CONSULATE OFFICER CONFIRMED ESSENTIALS OF ABOVE STORY SEPT. 6 WITH MAJOR PATANADEJ WHO HAD SERVED WITH THAI FORCES IN LONG CHENG 1967 - 70 AND WAS ASSIGNED TO ESCORT VANG PAO PARTY IN THIS VISIT. AMONG FACTUAL ERRORS

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IN STORY WERE ARRIVAL DATE AND REFERENCE TO USAF PLANE. PARTY

ACTUALLY ARRIVED HERE AUGUST 28. MAJOR PAT SAID PARTY RETURNED TO LAOS ON CHARTERED CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES PLANE AND HAD ARRIVED IN CHIANG MAI ON CHARTERED AIRCRAFT, WHICH HE ALSO BELIEVED BORE CAS MARKINGS.

3. ACCORDING TO MAJOR PAT, VANG PAO'S UNOFFICIAL VISIT WAS TO OBSERVE VARIOUS HILLTRIBE HIGHLAND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS IN NORTHERN THAILAND WITH VIEW TO APPLYING SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN LAOS. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THREE MEO OFFICERS CALLED "DEVELOPMENT CADRE" APPARENTLY REPRESENTING VARIOUS AREAS OF AGRICULTURAL EXPERTISE ON HIS STAFF.

4. AUGUST 28 PARTY VISITED FRUIT TREE ORCHARD BEHIND KING'S PALACE ON DOI SUTHEP AND MEO VILLAGE OF CHANGKIEN, WHICH IS AGRICULTURAL STATION UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE. NEXT DAY PARTY FLEW BY POLICE AIR DIVISION HELICOPTER TO VILLAGE OF PHAMON ON DOI INTHANON TO VISIT AGRICULTURAL COFFEE STATION. FROM THERE FLEW TO MEO VILLAGE OF NONG HOI IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE TO INSPECT VEGETABLE FARM, THEN ON TO FANG DISTRICT WHERE THEY VISITED ROYAL AGRICULTURAL STATION AT ANG KHANG AND CANNING FACTORY AT BAN YANG. ON AUGUST 30 GROUP SPENT ENTIRE DAY VISITING MAE JOE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE. MAJOR PAT SAID VANG PAO DID NOT MEET ANY CIF PERSONNEL.

5. MAJOR SAID HE BELIEVED VANG PAO'S VISIT TO THAILAND ARRANGED BY DR. SUCHIT (LNU) WHOM HE IDENTIFIED AS WEALTHY THAI BUSINESSMAN LIVING IN BANGKOK BUT WITH CONSIDERABLE PROPERTY IN CHIANG MAI. PAT ALSO SAID SUCHIT IS LONG-TIME PERSONAL FRIEND OF VANG PAO. MAJOR SUGGESTED UN DEVELOPMENT PERSONNEL MIGHT HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ARRANGEMENTS BECAUSE SEVERAL OF SITES VISITED WERE UN PROJECTS.

6. VANG PAO'S VISIT HERE OCCURRED DURING CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH OPENING OF NORTHERN OFFICE OF PRACHATHIPATAI. LARGE CONTINGENT OF NEWSPAPER'S BANGKOK STAFF WERE IN TOWN FOR CEREMONIES AND ONE OF THEM RECOGNIZED VANG PAO IN RINCOME HOTEL LOBBY. LATTER INITIALLY REFUSED INTERVIEW

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BECAUSE HE DID NOT DESIRE ANY PUBLICITY ON HIS VISIT WHICH MIGHT BE MISCONSTRUED OR DELIBERATELY MISREPRESENTED BY A SPECULATIVE PRESS.

7. THERE WAS SOME USAF ACTIVITY AT AIRPORT DURING THIS PERIOD PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH CINCPAC VISIT. PRACHATHIPATAI STAFF PASSING THROUGH AIRPORT MIGHT HAVE LINKED (ERRONEOUSLY) THIS ACTIVITY WITH VANG PAO'S

VISIT. MANIFESTS OF LOCAL DETACHMENT OF 6TH AERIAL
PORT (USAF) FOR PAST SEVERAL WEEKS DO NOT CONTAIN ANY
REFERENCES TO VANG PAO PARTY.

8. CONSULATE LOCAL POLITICAL ASSISTANT VISITED CHIANG RAI
AREA AUGUST 29-30 AND PICKED UP REPORTS OF HUNDREDS OF
VANG PAO'S MEO CROSSING BORDER. THAIS IN AREA FEAR
THESE MEOS MAY HAVE JOINED UP WITH CTS FOR SURVIVAL AS
US SUPPORT TO VANG PAO WITHDRAWN AND HE UNABLE TO KEEP HIS
FORCES TOGETHER BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS.

COMMENT: THIS MAY HELP EXPLAIN VANG PAO'S INTEREST IN
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR TRIBESMEN AND, ALSO,
HIS ANXIETY ABOUT HAVING PURPOSE OF VISIT MISCONSTRUED.
HARBIN

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